MANITOBA.

The History of a Year.

(*From* The Manitoban.)

The year 1871 has passed into the domain of history. It has everywhere been an eventful year. What changes has it not wrought on the face of the globe!

On the Continent of Europe, great victories on the one hand, great disasters on the other, have readjusted national boundaries, and redistributed national prestige. This Continent has not been without its share of important events. Who would have ventured, last New Year's day, to predict that before another year came round, arrangements would be made for the peaceful solution of questions which have kept the two great branches of the British race for years on the very verge of war?

The man who shall write the history of 1871, will have the material for a magnificent record. Gladly would we notice the events of the year, if it were only to glance at them—but we are deterred by the multiplicity and variety of the topics which compete for attention. Be ours the task—an humble, but not necessarily useless task, to review the year so far as our little Province is concerned. To the bulk of the outside world, our affairs may be of little moment. To us who have made Manitoba our home—to those who purpose to make it their home,—it cannot but be interesting to know what progress a year has made in laying the foundations of Civil Government in the country, and paving the way for the prosperous future that awaits us.

We shall begin with the time when the Lieutenant-Governor landed at Fort Garry. This will comprise rather more than a year, but so little more, that, up to the present moment, we may assume to be dealing with the first year of Manitoba.

Let us recall for a moment the excitement which existed at the period when our review commences. It was a time of universal uneasiness. We shall not refer to the events of 1869 and 1870, further than to say that they had left behind them memories of the most painful and irritating character, and that a large portion of the people felt that the time had come to exact a return in kind for the sufferings of which their memories supplied such vivid recollections.

The excitement was still further increased by the presence of bands of roving Indians scattered up and down through the settlements. These savages, drawn to the front by the prospects of war, had been appealed to for support, and from fear or recklessness, had received promises it was impossible to fulfil. They were hovering round the settlements in a state of starvation, living on pillage and making night hideous with their frightful orgies. The antagonism between the English and French races, divided the country into two hostile camps—not only arrayed against each other, but subject to the danger of collision with the hungry and disappointed savages who were prowling about the settlements. This was not a state of things to be rashly dealt with. It required great tact, great courtesy, and great firmness to dispel the elements of danger and bring about a better state of affairs. To this task the Lieutenant-Governor devoted himself. He sought to soothe the irritated passions of the two white races: he persuaded the Indians to return to their hunting grounds; gave them food to carry them there, and powder and shot to enable them to support themselves by hunting when there. Gradually, the seething excitement began to subside, and in the course of a few months, a feeling of safety and security dawned upon all classes, and our people, in the usual employments of peace, began to forget the troubles and turmoils, through which they had passed.

The establishment of a Police force

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was one of the first requirements for the organization of stable Government. This was done as rapidly as the circumstances of the country permitted, and we may say of the Police, which has now been organized for a year, that, first year though it be, and with all its shortcomings, it may fairly challenge comparison with that of older countries. For the last nine months, life and property in this Province, have been as secure, as in any other Province of the Dominion.

The next thing to be done towards organizing Civil Government, was to obtain an accurate knowledge of the number and distribution of the people. Arrangements were made for that purpose. The census had to be taken under circumstances when it was all important; not only that it should be done fairly, but that the returns should be above doubt or suspicion. The arrangements made were without precedent, as the result is beyond experience. Every return for every District is certified and attested by men enjoying the confidence of the most opposite sections of the population. An Englishman and a Frenchman, a Protestant and a Catholic, men of the most opposite political and religious sentiments, have united in signing each Census Book, and swearing to its correctness. At this moment no man doubts the absolute correctness of the Census Returns; that the Census has been impartially and honestly taken.

After this came the necessary preparations for the introduction of representative institutions. There was no Election Law in the country. A law had to be framed by the Lieutenant-Governor under the provisions of the Act of Manitoba. The country was divided into twenty-four Electoral Divisions. The proceedings at the hustings were conducted by men, scarcely one of whom had ever seen an election, yet their duties were discharged in a manner that would have reflected credit on any country.

When Parliament met, a code of laws was submitted and passed, laying broad the foundations of civil government, a code, which we may venture to say, will challenge comparison with the first year's work of any Legislature in the world.

Already, we have had the experience of a twelve-month under these laws, and it will be found when the Legislature meets again, that amendments, if any are required, will be in the way of extension and development. The simplicity of the original laws was intentional. They were framed to admit additions or enlargements without violence to the original fabric, and to receive such additions and enlargements, as the circumstances of the country demanded them. Till this code was passed, crime could not be punished in the Province. Not that the court was without jurisdiction, but there was no power to convene a Grand Jury, and without a Grand Jury, there could be no indictment. There was no authority to summon a Petit Jury, and without a Petit Jury there could be no trial. From the time, therefore, when the Governor arrived, till the third day of April, when this law passed, our tribunals had no power to punish. Offenders, to be sure, might be arrested; but they must have remained in prison or be let loose again on the community without conviction or punishment.

Under the new law, the machinery of the court has been called into operation. The Grand Inquest has been convoked; Juries summoned and impanelled, offenders indicted, tried, convicted, and condemned. The astute lawyers who were engaged in the defence failed to find a single flaw in the machinery constructed to carry out the laws of the land.

The only gaol existing in the country at the time of the Lieutenant-Governor's arrival, he found occupied by the military as a hospital. Besides this, the old goal had an unauspicious history—its doors had so often yielded to pressure from within, that it could hardly be looked upon as a place of safe custody. It was therefore necessary to provide other prisons.

A Police Station was built at Winnipeg and a suitable stone building at the Lower Fort, hired from the Hudson Bay Company, was repaired and remodelled to adapt it to the purposes of a Gaol and Penitentiary.

At the last meeting of the General Court the Grand Jury visited this prison and pronounced the highest eulogium on its condition and management.

Next came the question of the Indians. We have seen the state of their feelings when they left the Settlement. The Lieutenant-Governor had promised that they should be sent for when the spring came round, and dealt with for their lands. They were summoned to meet at the Lower Fort. After a fortnight's tedious discussion, after the patience of everybody was exhausted, a solution was at length reached, and a treaty made which, while doing full justice to the Indians, at the same time provides for the cession of their rights upon terms which contrast very favorably with those contained in the treaties the Americans have made with the tribes across the frontier. It is something to have conducted this operation with two thousand savages, encamped for a fortnight in the midst of our population, and all this without disturbance or disorder of any kind, without a blow being struck, or even a glass of intoxicating liquor being consumed, by a people whose craving for drink amounts to insanity.

It may be possible that the police arrangements which established a cordon on every road, and permitted no intoxicating liquors to pass, were a little beyond the strict letter of the law, but it was worth while to strain a point, to be able to place before the world the spectacle of a vast horde of savages, demeaning themselves for a fortnight, with a decency and propriety, which might well put our civilization to the blush.

The Indians returned to their homes without committing the smallest depredation, even to the extent of taking a pole from a farmer's fence, or a potatoe from his field.

A similar Treaty was negotiated shortly afterwards at Lake Manitoba. Under the arrangements so made, a tract of land equal to four such Provinces as this, has been thrown open for occupation and cultivation.

When the Lieutenant-Governor came here, there was no postal system in operation. Once a week our mails were carried to Pembina. We had to pay a fee on every letter sent there. We had, also, to frank our letters with American stamps, and to transmit them, subject to inspection, at the American border, by the people who throng the office at Pembina, many of whom had been connected with our troubles here in a way to make this inspection most undesirable. In a year all this has changed. Our mails are transmitted and received three times a week instead of once. They are carried in closed bags, sealed before they leave the territory of the Dominon and kept sealed till they reach it again. They are carried, not as formerly, in a Red River cart, but in vehicles drawn by four horses and driven at the rate of 7 miles an hour. All over the country, post offices have been established on a simple system, and there is not a cluster of houses in any part of the Province sufficiently compact to be called a settlement, where the mail is not, once a week at least, in many places twice a week, received with its welcome budget of letters and intelligence.

A year ago there was neither Custom House nor Customs' officers to be found in the Province. The Act of Manitoba had continued the powers of the officials of the Hudson Bay Company, but the men were either ignorant of, or failed to discharge, their duty. No entries were made—no duties collected. When it became desirable to ascertain, approximately, the extent of our importations, the Lieutenant-Governor was obliged to resort to the offices of a foreign country, and form his estimate from the entries for exportation made in the U. S. Custom House at Pembina. Mr. Spencer was sent here to organize the department, and, under his able and efficient management, the Customs have been put in perfect order.

When he arrived the authority of the Dominion officials to collect duties was denied. A leading trader from Montreal, gravely alleging that he had the best advice the bar of that city could furnish, deliberately refused to pay duties and threatened resistance if any attempt were made to collect them. Mr. Spencer acted with vigor. Supported by the police authorities, he seized the goods of the offender, and proceeded to deal with them according to law. One example was sufficient. From that hour to this, no man has ventured to refuse, and Mr. Spencer's arrangements leave no chance to evade, the payment of duties.

Under a tariff of 4 per cent, $40,000 have poured, during the present year, into the treasury of the Dominion. With the tariff what it will be on and after the 12th of May, 1873, the duties of this year would have more than doubled the sum allotted by the Act of Manitoba to the uses of this Province.

A year ago there was not a line run or a Crown Land Surveyor to be found in the Province. The Maps of the country were made from the crudest information. Its physical features were distorted—the Lakes and Rivers misplaced. Now the whole Province has been mapped off into blocks containing four townships each; the site of Rivers the and Lakes ascertained, the errors in the topography adjusted, and arrangements, for the final subdivision into sections so far complete, as to make the country ready for any amount of immigration in the coming year.

The local management of the Crown domain has been placed in charge of Mr. M'Micken and that gentleman has entered upon the business of his office with an energy and spirit, which guarantee his fitness for the difficult and laborious duties incident to the position.

The vast interior lying to our west, has hitherto been open only to the Dog Train or the Red River Cart. At this moment, within a few miles of where we write, may be seen the hulls of two steamers—one of which, in the early part of next season will startle with its shrill whistle the wandering savages of Lake Manitoba: while the echoes of the other, will reverberate from the winding banks of the Saskatchewan.

The interior will hereafter be accessible without exposure and without toil, and the shrieks of the steam ship along the great river of the West will herald a population that will spread itself along its banks and carry the arts of civilization and refinement to our western wilds.

A year ago we were riven by intestine dissensions and angry feelings—some of our people, few in number, but noisy in demonstration—with little to lose and everything to gain from civil convulsions—did their best

to inflame thesedangerous passions. A band of lawless men speculated upon this state of things and invaded our territory, hoping that in the excitement of passion one-half our people would flock to their standard. The indignant uprising of a thousand Englishmen, ready to defend their country and their flag,—the united phalanx of the French *Metis* of all the Parishes, avowing a determination to rally to the Crown, was the response these marauders received. We gave proof to the invaders and to the world, that, differ as we might among ourselves on matters of minor moment, our hearts were right, and our hands ready, when duty called us to the defence of our common country.

A year ago it took 30 days to receive from Ottawa a reply to a Telegraphic Message; now as many hours suffice.

A year ago the nearest communication with the outside world was by way of St. Cloud. A dreary journey of 400 miles separated Fort Garry from the terminus of the Railway.

In one year the Iron road has abridged that distance by half, and we are now within 200 miles of the North Pacific Crossing at Morehead, in the neighbourhood of Georgetown.

A little over a year ago the Military Expedition, sent from Collingwood by the Lakes, after prodigies of toil and endurance, succeeded in reaching Fort Garry by the circuitous route of the Winnipeg River, after a march of three months. This year, so much is the line improved, that 200 men, at a season when snow and frost had increased enormously the hardships of the route, reached Fort Garry in perfect health, and without an accident, in 20 days from the day they left Thunder Bay.

A year ago, the question of a Railway to the Pacific was a thing of theory. Its practicability was based upon conjecture. The whole country between this and the western frontier of Ontario was unknown. During the past season the intervening space has been divided into sections. An efficient surveying party has been despatched into each, while between Fort Garry and the West a party has been organized to reconnoitre the ground and pursue their explorations, till they shall meet, in the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, other parties sent out from the Pacific Coast. By the time Parliament shall have met, the Government of the Dominion will be in a position to judge of the whole line of country intervening between the Ottawa and the borders of the Pacific Ocean.

May we not fairly say, then, that this Province has made great strides during the year that is just closing?

Out of the chaos in which the arrival of the Lieutenant-Governor found us, order and peace have been evoked. The excitements of times of trouble have passed away. A police has been organized—an enumeration of the inhabitants made—the country has been parcelled off into electoral divisions—elections have been held—a Assembly returned and convened; a responsible Ministry constituted; a code of laws enacted; Courts of Justice organized, and put in operation; justice administered; criminals tried convicted, and sentenced; the Indian title to half a Continent released; the public domain of the Province surveyed, laid off in blocks, and made ready for immigration; lines of communication with Thunder Bay by the Lakes, and with Duluth and St. Paul by the United States, improved; Steamships for communicating with the interior in course of construction, and railway explorations across the Continent, almost complete; Mail routes and Post Offices established all over the Province; Custom Houses instituted and duties collected; Prisons and Penitentiaries built; and, last of all, a Teleg aph Line established, making us part and parcel of the living world. We may well ask whether the crowding of all these events into the compass of a single year, is not a theme upon which we may congratulate ourselves and the Dominion to which we belong. We challenge the world to produce an instance where such an amount of work in any country, or about any country, has crowded the annals of a single year. Some of this work has been done outside of the authorities of the Dominion, but it is fair to say even of what has been so done, that much of it is due to the energy with which the Dominion authorities and the Local authorities have applied themselves to the task of opening and developing the vast resources of the country committed to their charge.

Of the rest of the work we are not concerned to apportion to each of the parties engaged in it the exact measure of praise which may be due.

Where all have worked well, it would be invidious to distinguish, but this we may say, that the Government of the Dominion, and the officials they have sent here, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province and the gentlemen with whom he has been surrounded, as his constitutional advisers, have acted with but one aim—that of faithfully discharging the responsible functions which the possession of this noble heritage imposes upon those who have in their hands, the administration of public affairs.